

Ford Site Planning Task Force
April 16, 2007
Lumen Christi Catholic Church

Meeting #5 Summary

Ford Site Planning Task Force members present: Carole Faricy, Co-Chair, William Klein, Co-Chair, Peter Armstrong, Shawn Bartsh, James Bricher, Richard Broderick, Terri Dooher Fleming, David Drach, Charles Hathaway, Deborah Karasov, Angela Kline, Scott Malcolm, Gary Marx, Lance Neckar, Dennis Rosemark, Matthew Schuerger, Dave Sellergren, Stuart Simek, Morgan Tamsky, Bruce Valen, Stephanie Warne, Ellen Watters, Pamela Wheelock; **Absent:** Ronnie Brooks; **Newly Appointed:** Jim Reinitz

City Staff, others agency reps or consultants present: Cecile Bedor (PED), Patty Lilledahl (PED), Merritt Clapp-Smith (PED), Luis Pereira (PED), Lucy Thompson (PED), Nancy Homans (Mayor's Office), Ward 3 Councilmember Pat Harris, Deana Swetlik and Bill Vitek (EDAW), Bob Close and Bruce Jacobson (Close Landscape Architects), Tom Lincoln (URS), Caren Dewar (Dewar & Assc.s), Monte Hilleman (Port Authority), Jeff Patterson (Colliers), Gayle Summers (Highland District Council), Anne Carroll (Capstone), Yujie Bao (Capstone), Tim Dykstal (Capstone), Jake Granholm (Capstone), Ellen Heine (Capstone), Mike Kisch (Capstone), Tamara Downs Schwei (Capstone).

Others Attending (based on meeting sign-in sheet): Jane McClure, Jason Hoppin, Michael Belaen, Lynn Hinkle, Charles Nelson, John Shardlow, Margaret Tabar, Gary Fischbach, Joel Klemmer, Ted LaValley, Ned Rukavina, Mat and Karla Hollinshead

Meeting called to order by co-chair Carole Faricy at 6:33 PM. Jim Reinitz, UAW member, was introduced to the Ford Site Planning Task Force (TF) as a new member. Co-chair Faricy asked for any corrections to the Draft Meeting #4 Summary. Co-chair Bill Klein suggested one correction he suggested. Faricy asked if there were other requested changes to the Meeting Summary. Hearing none, the revised Summary was approved by the majority of the TF, with one vote in opposition, 23-1. Next, Faricy announced that the Capstone students (Ford Site Study Team) would be presenting their findings to the TF, one hour before the next TF meeting, on May 7th, from 5:30-6:30 PM, and she strongly urged all TF members to attend.

Co-chair Faricy turned attention to the "Vision and Goals" memo sent to the TF prior to the meeting. Faricy recommended that the TF vote to approve the proposed Vision statement as a "working" Vision. She noted that the Vision statement had received a favorable response from many TF members, and that the TF had already spent a considerable amount of time discussing the Vision and Goals, and should now move on to other work.

A motion was made to approve the proposed Vision statement sent out in the memo. The motion was seconded. Faricy asked for discussion. TF member Karasov expressed concern that the proposed Vision language -- "balance economic, social and environmental sustainability" -- did not do enough to ensure that environmental interests would be adequately addressed. She proposed the following change to the Vision statement:

Ford Site Vision (Proposed)

The redeveloped Ford Site will balance economic, social and environmental sustainability in a way that ~~builds on~~ *conserves and improves* the qualities and characteristics of the unique Highland Park neighborhood and River Valley Corridor in which it sits, while advancing the City's economic wealth and community goals, resulting in forward-thinking 21st Century development.

Faricy asked for additional comments. Hearing none, a motion and second were made to approve Karasov's suggested revision to the Vision statement. Motion passed with one TF member opposed. Faricy then asked for a motion to approve the revised Vision as a 'working' Vision statement. Motion and second made to approve the Vision statement. No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Faricy next asked the TF to consider approving the revised Goals sent out in the memo. Motion and second made to approve the revised Goals. Faricy asked for discussion and noting none, asked for a vote. The TF approved the revised Goals, with one TF member strongly opposed. Karasov expressed concern that there was not enough time for discussion of the Goals before a vote was taken.

Jeff Patterson, from the Market Research division of Colliers International and hired by the St. Paul Port Authority as a real estate market consultant to assist the Ford Project planning Phase I, presented the firm's preliminary findings of the market potential of the Ford site. Patterson gave an overview of residential, retail/commercial, industrial, and office market potential. He noted the site's key attributes, including proximity to the airport, unique river views, access to viable existing transit, and being within an established neighborhood in the center of the region; and key site challenges, including its difficult, restricted access (away from a major arterial or collector street) and the problematic traffic circulation in the neighborhood.

In terms of the **residential** market, Patterson said that despite a regional and national housing market "slump," the Highland Park market for single family has been strong. On the multifamily side, rapid condo and townhouse development has led to an oversupply in the market, but the regional rental apartment market is gaining strength, given falling vacancies, rising rents, and the lack of urban infill sites with desirable locational attributes that are zoned for multifamily development. This is especially true in Highland, where new rental projects have very low vacancies. The Ford site shows great potential for senior housing, including the "continuum of care" model. In sum, the Ford site could be great for condominium, apartment, or senior residential developments, as well as single family at all price points.

In terms of the regional **retail** market, Patterson stated that it is strong in the Twin Cities, with commercial vacancies in St. Paul just above the regional average (7.3 vs. 6.2%, respectively). He characterized Highland as "underserved," with a lot of retailers who would like to find space but cannot. He said there is potential for another 100,000-150,000 square feet of retail in Highland, but not demand for big box retail. He noted that new retail space would best be served by structured parking.

In terms of **industrial** potential, the City's office/showroom, office/warehouse, and bulk distribution center space has remained below the regional vacancy level, and despite the development of 7 business/industrial centers over the past 13 years, a shortage of land continues to exist for new job creation. Industrial potential will continue to be positive during the remainder of the decade. In terms of reusing the existing plant buildings, Patterson said that based on what he and other Colliers staff saw on an internal tour of the plant facility, the existing buildings are not up to modern standards and some are functionally or economically obsolete. Patterson said there is potential for up to 30 acres (24%) of the site to be used for "high finish, light industrial space," but that arterial and roadway traffic access to site would need to be improved or upgraded to make the site viable for such uses. Patterson further explained that based upon a number of interviews and inquiries conducted by his firm, the probability that the existing plant would be reused by a heavy manufacturing firm, particularly one directly linked to the automotive industry, was remote.

Finally, in terms of **office** potential, the office market outside of the Downtown Central Business District is surprisingly strong, with vacancies of only 8.5%. Patterson described a "modest" multi-tenant office potential, up to 100,000 square feet, on the site, mainly with a neighborhood service orientation, modest potential for a corporate campus, and stronger potential for an institutional campus. The MNSCU training center could be reused / incorporated into the latter scheme.

In concluding, Patterson noted that there are two "unknowns" that could affect the reuse possibilities of the site: the environmental condition of the site and the tunnels underneath the site. More information about these will be required to determine feasibility of different uses.

After the Colliers presentation, the EDAW planning consultant team presented several case study "best practice" examples to stimulate thinking about potential opportunities for the Ford site. These case studies included redevelopment projects at Stapleton Airport, Atlantic Station, and Mission Bay. The Capstone Ford Site Study Team students then presented three "best practice" examples, including Washington Landing in Pittsburgh, PA, Ford Rouge River Plant in Dearborn, Michigan, and Baldwin Park in Orlando, Florida. Handouts on these and

other best practice examples, one from EDAW and one from the Capstone team, were available for Task Force members to pick up after the meeting.

Next, the Planning Consultant Team introduced 18 “themes” for the site, showing a wide range of very generalized land use and street layouts. Several of the themes focused on a single type of land use for most of the site (either industrial, office/institutional, open space, residential, or retail), and the remainder of the themes included different land use mixes. The 18 themes addressed in different ways the site’s “primary features,” defined as the MNSCU training center, the existing little league ball fields, the railroad spur and tracks, the original Albert Kahn showroom and assembly building on the site, and major roadways near the site (as well as new roadways across the site). The TF was subsequently split into 5 groups, and the groups rotated between 5 tables discussing different themes at each table, with 15 minutes spent at each table.

General Comments from the Task Force on the Themes:

- No high density next to Mississippi River Road
- Stage low to higher density as you move east
- Use Cretin as a connector spine, not Mt. Curve
- Finer grain of roads to disperse traffic preferred to a few large roads thru the site
- Embed green space among uses
- Consider shifting Mississippi River Blvd east a bit to broaden green space along River
- Incorporate public art and historical legacy elements into the site
- Residential on Mississippi River Blvd should face it, not be sideways to it
- Do not use cul-de-sacs
- Do not put baseball fields along Mississippi River Blvd
- Do not overly segregate land uses, maintain fluid transitions within and between them

Theme	Description	Red Votes (unfavorable)	Green Votes (favorable)
A1	Industrial Single User	13	1
A2	Industrial Multiple Users	8	3
A3	Industrial “Flex Tech”	9	7
B1/C1	Office Research & Develop. / Institutional Education	4	7
B2/C2	Office Corporate / Institutional Medical	5	9
D1	Open Space Sports Complex	15	1
D2	Open Space Active/Passive/Civic	8	8
E1	Residential Neighborhood Fabric	2	14
E2	Residential Lifecycle/Scale/Density	11	4
G1	Mixed Use Urban Village	3	15
G2	Mixed Use High Density Urban Node	4	1
G6	Mixed Use Open Space	7	9
F1	Retail	18	0
G3	Mixed Use Campus	1	13
G4	Mixed Use Industrial	4	3
G5	Mixed Use Commercial/Entertainment/Food	2	17

Each TF member was given 5 green dots and 5 red dots and were instructed to vote for their 5 most preferred themes, their 5 least preferred themes, with only one dot per theme allowed. The TF votes are tabulated above. The Consultant Team said that they would review the TF votes and comments, and narrow down the 18 themes to about 10 working land use concepts, with the goal of then narrowing down the 10 concepts to 3-5 detailed alternative development scenarios by the end of the Phase I Planning process.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.